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F I T Z - R O Y C H A P E L,

ON OCCASION OF

The GENERAL THANKSGIVING,

Appointed to be held on THURSDAY, the 23d Day of April, 1789, for

HIS MAJESTY'S RECOVERY

FROM THE

SEVERE ILLNESS WITH WHICH HE HAD BEEN AFFLICTED.

By the Rev. ROBERT ANTHONY BROMLEY, B. D.
MINISTER OF THAT CHAPEL;

Rector of St. MILDRED's, POULTRY; and Lecturer of St. JOHN's, HACKNEY.

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S E R M O N, &c.

P S A L M XVIII. 51.

GREAT PROSPERITY GIVETH HE UNTO HIS KING, AND SHEWETH
LOVING-KINDNESS UNTO DAVID HIS ANOINTED, AND UNTO HIS
SEED FOR EVERMORE.

THE happiness or the affliction of Sovereigns can never cease to involve the first feelings of their people. So much of the general welfare depends on the felicity which fills the seat of Government, or, if it did not, so much veneration naturally subsists in every breast, whether rude or civilized, for those who have the rule over them, that if we are bidden *to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep*, in common life, every liveliest sensibility must be awakened to participate in the calamity or the joy which attends a Throne.

But the Text goes to a more extensive sentiment, which carries from man to the Almighty that regard to the personal felicity of his Vicegerents upon earth, if their characters are at all worthy of any

portions of it. *David* had every reason to speak of this in every strength of expression. He had been the very nurture of Heaven; he had enjoyed the immediate selection of God, and had felt the divine favour continually attendant on his steps, which had carried him through all circumstances, and protected him in all dangers. On his part, he did not disappoint this divine predilection. It is thus recorded of him: *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that God commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite**. He was therefore embraced as *the man after God's own heart*†.

But *David* was by no means a single instance of this happy experience. It was not necessary that every Prince should be *a man after God's own heart*, it was enough that he was the Lord's anointed, to feel that special succour of the Almighty Providence, that special regard to his personal comfort, that tenderness for his errors, and that backwardness to severity for his faults, which to reflecting minds were sufficient to have made good men of them all. Through the whole number of those, whom sacred history records on the Throne of his peculiar people, either in the lines of *Israel* or of *Judah*, wherever any portion of good was found, that good was constantly met by every mark of divine good-will which might improve it; it never failed to *cover a multitude of sins*, at least to suspend greatly the exercise of divine displeasure; it hath been rewarded by that express interposition of Providence, which hath removed a dangerous disease, in the case of *Hezekiah*; it hath prolonged the Sovereignty in that family for certain generations to come, in the case of *Jehu*; it hath saved for a time a

* 1 Kings, xv. 5.

† 1 Sam. xiii. 14. Acts, xiii. 22.

whole reprobate people, and put off the destruction of wicked *Jerusalem*, in the case of *Josiah*; it hath given to the individual, in whom that portion of good hath been found, as in the case of *Abijah* the son of *Jeroboam*, the honours of a burial, when not another of his family, devoted for their extreme wickedness, hath been suffered to go to the grave. Thus hath the divine pleasure met the manifestations of any better character in the Princes of his people. And where their characters have been absolutely bad, where their more notorious disobedience, or perversion of their principles, have necessitated his determination to rend the Sovereignty from their immediate line of succession, he hath done it with that postponing hand, which hath generally chosen rather to wear them out by the ordinary termination of life, than at once to cut them off. *Saul* with many others experienced this, and *Solomon* experienced more. His gross idolatries *must* incur a forfeiture of the Sovereignty, as far as was consistent with the divine promises to his Father, that *his seed for evermore should sit upon the throne*. The Almighty therefore did not make that Prince a living monument of his anger; he did not break his scepter ignominiously before his own eyes; laying in his claim to do himself visible justice for those idolatries, he let him go to his grave in peace; he left to his son a remnant and a shred of the Sovereignty, as a token of his abused good-will to the family—one solitary tribe, while he gave away ten others to a stranger, who formed from thence the separate line and kingdom of *Israel*.

If you say, that this train of divine administration, so far as the line of *David* was concerned, flowed chiefly from the special loving-kindness with which the Lord remembered that faithful servant :

vant : Then, take the lesson in that view. A good King was enabled, by the general worthiness of his character, to secure his Throne to a long posterity, in some instances profligate enough, and to transmit to them an unfailing protection in the providence of God, though he could not transmit his own virtues unimpaired. The race of Princes through the earth have therefore an additional argument here to hope for that divine favour to their Persons and their Government, where that foundation has been laid before them, and a powerful spur to become themselves, as much as possible, the founders (if I may so speak) of so precious a providence to their posterity. For the lesson now before us reaches, in all its aspects, to every Throne in the world. It was more marked indeed in the events of sacred history, because amidst the regal Government of the Jews there never ceased that supreme theocracy, which the Almighty exercised over all by his Prophets. We cannot expect the same evidences of his divine administration in the Kingdoms of the Heathen world at large, because they knew him not, and consequently no proper impressions of himself could be made upon their minds. But let us believe, that in the Kingdoms of his Son *Jesus Christ*, by whom the world has been enlightened to see and know his all-pervading providence, and *formed anew into a peculiar people* *, the same Almighty Father overlooks with the same considerate eye the situations and circumstances of his present Vicegerents upon earth, as well as of those that governed his kingdoms of *Israel* and *Judah*.

Their common situation is replete with the same cares and difficulties, which may plead to Heaven at all times for that special

* Titus, cap. ii. v. 14.

benignity of Providence. The management of Empires is not like that of individual concerns, be they ever so extensive. Neither are they both satisfied with the same measure of understanding, nor do they equally rest in the self-direction of those who conduct them. In the most absolute situations of Government, that self-direction cannot safely be pushed to every length; and in situations the best-modelled for the aids of Counsel, those who may advise are not always either the wisest or the honestest that might have been selected. The sentiments therefore of a people, nay, their very humours, and not only of the general public, but of parties and factions, will evermore furnish embarrassments to the best understandings and the best intentions of those that rule them, and will often render that which was difficult before absolutely distressing.

But the difficulties attendant on a Sovereign-station are not yet seen. Truth is one of the first blessings given to man for the conduct of life, and especially where he is placed in the exercise of important trust: This blessing is the very last that is given to be known by Princes. To be necessitated to see with the eyes of others certainly balances to the general ranks of men, if any one thing can, those splendors which leave every other individual in the country so far below them. How greatly then must the calamity be increased, when insincerity occupies the place of confidence; when sinister intrigue disguises the natural and just face of things, and perhaps precipitates into measures of rueful impolicy; when the moment of wisdom and of honour is sunk in the misfortune of misguided simplicity; and, what is worse than all, perhaps in that moment the foundation is laid in wickedness for the undeserved

served sacrifice of character, which no time may be able to develop?

Can any individuals below a Crown exhibit these feelings equally full? Can any others consequently, through all the diversified ranks of society, stand equally forward for that special favour of Heaven, which considers, spares, succours, protects and saves with loving kindness proportionable to the arduousness of duty? And what is the lesson read to us in that exercise of the Almighty Providence to those, who stand not more in the highest than the most difficult of human situations? Surely that we give them not only our reverence, but our love, our kindest affections, if there be any thing amiable and good about them; that we be merciful and liberal towards them, as our Heavenly Father is merciful and liberal; that we sincerely condole with them on every occasion which brings distress; that we fly to prayer and supplication for their comfort from the God and Father of all consolation; and that we *rejoice with joy unspeakable*, whenever that comfort is restored, whenever felicity revisits their hearts, and peace their dwellings.

That moment is now before us. We have seen our most gracious Sovereign afflicted by the sorest visitation of sickness: We have been witness to the loving-kindness of the Almighty, who hath compleatly restored him: We cried unto God in our common distress, that he would heal him, and he hath done so: And the piety of this restored Sovereign hath called on us now to unite with him in fervent thanksgivings for the gracious providence vouchsafed.

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Can we look upon it in any other light than as a most signal Providence? 'Tis little to speak of it on the common principle, though perfectly correct, that health and life are evermore the special gifts of Providence, *without whom not a sparrow can fall to the ground*. It is not enough to look at it as a great and interesting salvation accomplished to a great and good Prince. National events dependant on the moment might perhaps lift us to more marked ideas of this Providence, and there are who would be satisfied with it in that view, without looking farther: Undoubtedly the view is strong, and every way equal to the conclusion; for awful was the moment beyond dispute, and in some circumstances as critical as ever hung up the minds of men in the history of nations: On all sides therefore, allowing all sides to be christian, the issue must be set down as a Providence. But we mean not to enter into these things; it befits not us, and especially in this place, to mingle the adjustment of political concerns with that much nobler œconomy of Divine Government, which will flow more pertinently from our tongue, and furnish lessons more suitable to the purposes of a devout assembly. Never did a people commit themselves more decidedly to a dependance on a Providence than we did in our addressees to Heaven for the mercy which demands our present thanksgiving: We begged of the Almighty that he would hear us, and *to shew that he heard us, by granting this blessing so near to our hearts*. It was the warmth of genuine feeling, the fervour of confident piety. Once it might have appeared questionable, even on the clearest assurances of a Providence, and consistently with the most solid principles of its regular administration, whether the Infidel might not tauntingly have derided us with the fallacy of our ideas, and

the futility of our devotions. “If *the prayers of a righteous man avail much*, surely (he might have said) the prayers of a whole nation, and for a righteous man, must prevail still more, and fully succeed.”—They have succeeded: And the Christian principles are safe. The Believer now triumphs in the issue, which hath given him a proof, that he, who was the God and Saviour of *Hezekiah*, still lives to see the distress of a worthy Prince, to raise him from the bed of sickness, to give him renewed life, and to hear and gratify the supplications of an affectionate people. The calmest and most rational man, possessing any portion of religion, finds his ideas of an Universal Superior warmed and invigorated by the test (if I may use the expression) thus put on the part of man, and answered so rapidly as it was, in truth, answered here on the part of God. In the case of *Hezekiah*, the divine healing was not bestowed but through the visible medium of medicinal application. Yet how simple was the medium, and how quick the cure? If you take the difference between a fever on the body and a fever on the mind, the cure accomplished on the British Monarch was hardly less rapid than that which was obtained by the King of *Judah*.

Yet what a catastrophe was that which preceded this happy Recovery, where catastrophes as severe as this are perhaps least expected, and certainly meet those who are to bear them least prepared! Sorrows are always in proportion to their reverse. The scale, which contracts enjoyments, diminishes the extent and weight of their loss. In private life the accession of troubles is alleviated not only by that participation which attends the familiarity and friendship of intercourse, but by that assistance in many circum-

circumstances, which parallel situations have in their power to bestow. Let it be added too, that in all the classes of private life enjoyment is so apt to be darkened by some cross and wayward experience or other, that a great portion of affliction is lightened by the idea that it might be expected. But shall we single out, in common theory, a royal palace for the easy house of mourning? In those walls, where all is blissful, tranquil, and reciprocally kind, as uniform virtue, chearful decorum, and exemplary manners can harmonize, conceive desolating malady to enter in a moment, like a hurricane, and lay all felicity waste. Who shall support that affectionate Confort, who sees the constant and dear partner of all her virtues levelled in an instant by disease, which not only separates from the affection that would watch over it, but threatens to render vain all the efforts both of affection and skill? Who shall dry up the tears of those broken-hearted children, females especially, the natural inheritors of all that was most splendid and most highly protected, but now bereft at once both of a protector and a father—thrown in a moment from all their natural prospects to look down, perhaps with envy, on the humblest orphan around them, who finds somewhere or other, in a kindred or a stranger-heart, new fathers and protectors rise in the sincerity of feeling that *can* approach their sorrows, and *will* relieve them? How can we bring our minds, not to enumerate, but to reflect upon, the tedious hours of desolating grief endured by these the beloved objects of a most tender husband and father?—hours of grief made more severe by the apprehension, which hath too often been realized in similar situations, that the devotion, which hath been industrious even to slavery to attract the notice of royal power,

hath not been found even in outward ceremony, when that power hath been thrown into shade.—Is it human nature confined to no particular age and country, or is it the fate of Sovereignty, that it shall ever be attended by insincerity? that the pitiful hankerings of selfishness, and the impatience for bread to feed, not natural appetites, but false and extravagant ones, are incapable of forming any fast affections for virtue in its most shining examples? that these will ever shift not only with every actual migration of supreme power, but with the earliest symptoms of it, and in that shifting will eternally be embraced and trusted?

These experiences in their utmost stages have been, happily for all sides, averted by the providence of God. But the blessings vouchsafed by that providence in this event are far more precious than such temporal escapes. For nobler and more lasting purposes, we trust, our beloved Monarch hath been suffered, in the language of the Psalmist, to *awake as one out of sleep*: He hath *risen*, we doubt not, in the spiritual sense of the next words of the same sacred penman, *as a giant refreshed with wine*—invigorated and made stronger by those moral and religious reflections, to which his breast hath never been a stranger, but which may now probably be established there with more immoveable root—that as, in the mutual influence of mind and body, sickness like his argues no special infirmity, so the understanding will readily abandon every feeling of peculiar depression from thence: It is no more extraordinary that the bile or a fever should reach the brain than any other part of the body; nor is there more cause from thence for the Freedoms of the reviler, but infinitely more cause for generous concern, than if these or any other bodily affections caused the amputation of a limb.

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But a recovery like his is one of the strongest proofs that can be vouchsafed, under an ordinary Providence, of the special favour, and love, and blessing of the Almighty to his person and government. Excepting therefore the temporary sufferings of sickness, his sickness hath been gain, as it hath opened to his contemplations a treasure of mercies, from the divine Disposer of all things, which may reasonably fill his breast with a treasure of comforts. These reflections he will naturally cherish at all moments, looking up continually to the divine Spirit of Grace for those recruiting assistances which may feed those comforts for ever within him, and to the sacred word of his Redeemer for his best assurances that those comforts are solid. And while, in his present experience of them, He commemorates the divine blessings in the words of *David*, (which we trust he may do in the full extent of the letter) *great prosperity giveth he unto his King, and sheweth loving-kindness unto his anointed, and to his seed for evermore*; let us make the song of *Simeon* our own thanksgiving: *blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of his servant, to continue the mercies shewn to our forefathers, that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.*

F I N I S.

